

Capital Improvements Subcommittee Minutes
Wednesday, July 29, 2020
2:30 PM-4:30 PM
Remote via Zoom

Capital Improvements Subcommittee Members present: Helen Charlupski (Chair), Andreas Liu, Mariah Nobrega, and Barbara Scotto.

Other School Committee Members present: Sharon Abramowitz, Susan Wolf Ditkoff, Suzanne Federspiel, and David Pearlman.

School Staff present: Jim Marini, Mary Ellen Normen, Matt Gillis, and Robin Coyne.

Others present: Heath School Principal Asa Sevelius, Brookline High School Assistant Head of School Hal Mason, Lawrence Extended Day Program Director Mary Gardiner, Pierce Extended Day Director Ellen Lench, Baker Extended Day Director Sharon Corliss, Kindergarten Teacher and Brookline Educators Union (BEU) Health and Safety Chair Michelle Gordon, Director of Public Buildings Charlie Simmons, Engineer Carlos DeSousa, Advisory Committee Chair Michael Sandman, Advisory Committee Capital Subcommittee Chair Carla Benka, and Remote Task Force member David Gacioch.

1) Approval of Capital Improvement Subcommittee Minutes

On a motion of Ms. Scotto and seconded by Ms. Charlupski, the Capital Improvements Subcommittee voted (by roll call), with 3 in favor, 0 opposed, and 1 abstention (Ms. Nobrega), to approve the minutes of the July 14, 2020 meeting.

2) Discussion of Facility Issues for Opening of Schools in September

The Subcommittee discussed ventilation issues related to reopening the schools. Ms. Charlupski noted Remote Task Force and Expert Panels presentations/discussions on this topic. Engineer Carlos DeSousa provided an overview of current systems, and discussed options to increase Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) ratings without degrading air inflow. Options vary depending on the age of the building and type of system. It is important to change filters regularly. Mr. Simmons reported that the Department of Public Health is looking into products designed to minimize spread of COVID-19 through use of ionization and ultraviolet light. The Subcommittee discussed how opening windows can help with airflow. Mr. Gillis reviewed the location and functionality of windows by school. It was noted that some of the windows are not fully operational, and that the windows may need to be closed as the temperatures drop. The Subcommittee discussed ventilation and aerosolization in bathrooms. Mr. DeSousa will check whether State Building Codes permit toilet lids. Members asked that the window inventory include bathrooms. Members requested an update on the procurement and placement of HEPA air filters. Mr. DeSousa will share product information. Funds have not been budgeted, but the district received grant funds to help cover COVID related costs. The Subcommittee requested additional information on the process to determine Air Changes per Hour. Mr. DeSousa estimated it would take more than a month to assess all spaces. The Subcommittee requested an assessment of a typical and worse classroom in each school. Members commented that building design may impact ventilation, e.g., some Pierce classrooms do not have windows. Mr. DeSousa explained how air circulation systems work. Dr. Marini emphasized the importance of providing a safe air exchange rate. Mr. DeSousa will share information on cleaning and disinfecting protocol.

The Subcommittee will continue this discussion at the next meeting. Ms. Charlupski requested that staff report back on the procurement of HEPA filters (whether they have been ordered, and how many), measurement of air flow in a representative classroom sample in each building, ventilation and aerosolization in bathrooms, and the furniture inventory/options.

The Subcommittee discussed outdoor spaces, including tents. Mr. Gillis has initiated discussions with the Director of Parks and Open Space, and is looking at possible procurement of tents to provide some flexibility. There are a number of issues to consider, e.g., possible use of heaters and access to Wi-Fi and electricity. It was noted that the amount of open space at the schools varies, and that it might make sense to look at adjacent spaces. Members suggested considering community partnerships to provide space for rainy days and recommended using outside spaces for outdoor education, and not just as substitute space.

3) Extended Day Opening

Lawrence Extended Day Program Director Mary Gardiner, Pierce Extended Day Director Ellen Leno, Baker Extended Day Director Sharon Corliss were present to discuss Extended Day considerations for the reopening. The Directors requested clear and frequent communication between Central Administration and Extended Day, and had a number of questions/requests.

Programmatic Questions:

- *If we adopt a hybrid model, how do you see Extended Day programs fitting in this model? Especially with a noon dismissal? Will children be allowed to stay in the building? Eat lunch with us?*
- *New Department of Early Education and Care regulations require us to have smaller groups of children (currently 10 students with one staff member) and this will require us to utilize more space when we open. Will all principals be willing to work with us to help us identify more spaces we can use while these regulations are in place?*
- *Will Extended Day programs have access to the separate COVID spaces that the school uses or do we need to create our own space?*
- *Would we be able to accept children for care even on a day they may not be attending school in the hybrid model? This would allow us to enroll and retain families during this time when we are concerned about the possibility of declining enrollment.*
- *Is there any way to designate some of the public/playground spaces for extended day children only after school is dismissed? This would help us with safety and social distancing during outdoor recess.*

Questions regarding Rent and Other Costs:

- *Would the School Committee please consider offering us a credit for rental fees we paid last year for the months of April, May and June?*
- *Would there be any consideration for not charging us rent for this year only due to the current circumstances and the financial losses all of our programs have suffered? Some programs currently have no financial reserves.*
- *If rent cannot be waived for the year can we at least keep our current rental costs (which we have already budgeted for) and not be charged extra rent for additional spaces we will most likely need due to EEC regulations and social distancing?*

- *Will there be extra fees for Extended Day Programs associated with custodial fees and extra cleaning and disinfecting? Please note that the EEC requires us to thoroughly clean and sanitize spaces prior to using them and custodians would only need to clean our spaces at the end of the day, which is what was happening pre-COVID.*

Subcommittee members noted the importance of having a robust Extended Day Program, and expressed a willingness to work with Extended Day on these issues/questions. Principals will need to be consulted. It was noted that additional costs will be incurred for personal protective equipment, cleaning, and sanitizing. Mr. Gillis will check whether any Extended Day COVID related expenses could be reimbursed through grants. It was suggested that establishing a Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) Out of School Time Policy might help with some of these issues, and that providing extended day services at PSB schools, rather than through outside programs, may reduce overall community exposure. The Extended Day Directors agreed to submit their questions/requests in writing.

The next meeting of the Capital Improvements Subcommittee will take place on Wednesday, August 5, 2020, 1:00 PM-3:00 PM.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 PM.